

KAREN MIKOLASY: WASHINGTON STATE'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR

**HON. JAY INSLEE**

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 3, 1999*

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to announce that Karen Mikolasy has been chosen Washington State's Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Mikolasy teaches English at Shorecrest High School, located in Washington's 1st congressional district. During her 28 years, she has become famous for being not only a remarkable teacher, but also a tireless champion of her students' talents. She never fails to help them strive for excellence. She has devoted countless hours of selfless service to the most valuable resource in this country—our children. Her gift of teaching gives her students the intellectual tools to become successful and productive members of society.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing that impacts America's social, economic and political future more than the quality of learning that happens in our schools. I do not believe educators are given nearly the amount of accolades they deserve, so I appreciate the chance to simply say: thank you for the important and meaningful work you do.

With teachers like Karen Mikolasy, I am confident that today's students will become tomorrow's leaders.

Thank you, Karen Mikolasy, for your commitment to education and congratulations, again, on becoming Washington State's Teacher of the Year.

TRIBUTE TO FLORETTE POTKIN

**HON. BRAD SHERMAN**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 3, 1999*

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Florette Potkin, who is being honored for her dedicated service to the community. Florette and her family are residents of Northridge, California, and have been extremely generous to Temple Ner Maarav, our community, and many charitable causes.

President Kennedy once said, "For those to whom much is given, much is required." Temple Ner Maarav has recognized Florette for exemplifying leadership, volunteerism, and dedication. For over three decades, Florette has worked tirelessly to better the community as a whole.

Through her love for the arts, Florette found her way to Temple Ner Tamid through her participation in a musical play. Thereafter, she became active through a variety of programs within the temple. While serving as Sisterhood President in 1974, she also helped to pave the way for women in religious functions when she became a Bat Mitzvah that same year.

Florette and her husband, Perry, have served in leadership positions in both Temple Ner Tamid and Temple Maarev. Florette has also encouraged her four children to become active in the Jewish community. Florette has been unwavering in her efforts to work with

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members of the community through her generous contributions.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, please join me in paying tribute to Florette Potkin, who is truly a role model for the citizens of Los Angeles.

IN HONOR OF THE BAYONNE CHAPTER OF UNICO NATIONAL ON THEIR 50TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY

**HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 3, 1999*

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Bayonne Chapter of UNICO National on their 50th Anniversary of dedicated service to the community.

UNICO, an Italian-American organization, has been committed to serving the community through grassroots work and the building of partnerships with other community activist and advocacy groups while maintaining its identity as Italian-American. In order to fulfill this goal, UNICO National has supported five basic principals: maintain Unity; serve one's Neighbor; maintain Integrity of character; be motivated by Charity; and open Opportunity to the underprivileged.

Since its inception in 1949, the Bayonne Chapter of UNICO National has contributed more than \$300,000 to more than 200 charities, scholarship programs, youth programs, schools, senior organizations, as well as others in the community at need. Because of members' tireless efforts, the Bayonne Chapter has also been successful in facilitating a \$25,000 donation for the building of a Child Care Facility at the YMCA, at \$20,000 donation to the Bayonne Hospital, and a college scholarship program which has awarded more than \$50,000 in scholarships to local students.

The Bayonne Chapter of UNICO exemplifies leadership and dedication to both the Italian-American community and to Bayonne. For these tremendous contributions to New Jersey, I am very happy to honor the Bayonne Chapter for its achievements on its 50th Anniversary. I salute and congratulate UNICO National on these extraordinary accomplishments.

ADMINISTRATION CERTIFICATION OF RUSSIA REGARDING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, May 3, 1999*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, through Public Law 105-292, the International Religious Freedom Act, Congress is on record as standing for religious liberty throughout the world.

Furthermore, Public Law 105-177, the foreign appropriations legislation passed in the 105th Congress, mandates that no foreign aid money be appropriated to the Government of

the Russian Federation if the President determines that the Russian government has implemented legislation or regulations that discriminate, or cause discrimination, against religious groups or religious communities in Russia in violation of accepted international agreements on human rights and religious freedoms to which the Russian Federation is a party. This provision was in response to the 1997 Russian Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations, which many feared would lead to limitations on religious worship and a retreat from the standards of religious freedom that had been achieved in Russia following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

This year, for the second year in a row, the President has made the determination that the Government of the Russian Federation has not implemented legislation or regulations that cause such discrimination against religious groups. The Presidential Determination states "During the period under review, the Government of the Russian Federation has applied the 1997 Law on Religion in a manner that is not in conflict with its international obligations on religious freedom. However, this issue requires continued and close monitoring as the Law on Religion furnishes regional officials with an instrument that has been interpreted and used by officials at the local level to restrict the activities of religious minorities." Furthermore, the Presidential Determination states, "To the extent that restrictions on the rights of religious minorities have occurred, they have been the consequence of actions taken by regional or local officials and do not appear to be a manifestation of federal government policy. Such incidents, while they must be taken seriously, represent a relatively small number of problems when viewed against the size of the country and the number of religious organizations."

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the above statements are a reasonably accurate representation of the religious liberty situation in Russia and that the Presidential Determination is probably a fair one, given the lack of firm legal structure and the geopolitical situation in the present-day Russian Federation. Moreover, some of the most egregious instances of restrictions against religious groups in Russia have been corrected through court action.

And to be fair, Russia is hardly the worst offender in the former Soviet Union. In Turkmenistan, for instance, religious groups are required to have five-hundred members before they can be legally registered with the government to operate openly. It is a ridiculously high number and has resulted in harassment of unregistered religious groups. Of course, unlike Russia, the Government of Turkmenistan doesn't claim to be much of a democracy or go out of its way to adhere to international standards of human rights.

In Uzbekistan, the 1998 law imposes severe criminal penalties for meeting without registering and for engaging in free religious expression with the intent to persuade the listener to another point of view, in violation of OSCE religious liberty commitments. Since February 1999, several pastors in Uzbekistan have been detained and jailed on charges of drug possession eerily reminiscent of charges brought in years past against Soviet religious dissidents.